HVTH
BEQVEST.

Variations in Copies of the Early Quartos and Folios.—Critics and commentators have often asserted that there was no proof-reading by author or editor in Elizabethan times; but we have positive evidence to the contrary. At the end of Beeton's 'Will of Wit' (1599) we find this note:—'What faults are escaped in the printing, finde by discretion; and excuse the author, by other worke that let [that is, hindered] him from attendance to the presse.' The Shakespeare quartos and folios were often corrected while passing through the press. In the 'Griggs' series noticed above there are two reproductions of the 1597 quarto of 'Richard II.', one photographed from a copy belonging to Mr. Henry Huth, the other from the Duke of Devonshire's copy. These two copies of the same edition were found to vary so much from each other that it was decided to reprint both. A careful comparison of the originals with each other and with a third copy formerly belonging to Capell, the Shakespeare editor, proved that corrections were made while each sheet was being printed; and that the corrected and uncorrected sheets were mixed up in binding. Five sheets or 'signatures' appear to be the same in the three copies mentioned. Of the other sheets the first and fourth are corrected in the Huth copy, the second in the Devonshire copy, the third in both the Devonshire and the Huth, and the fifth (the ninth in the book) in the Devonshire and the Capell. It happens, however, that by far the larger number of corrections are in the Devonshire copy, most of them occurring in the second sheet. The following, for example, are all found on a single page (i. 2. 42–70):—

Where then alas may I complaine myself?
('alas' omitted in the other copies);
That it may enter butcher Mowbraies breast
('butchers' in the others);
Not with the emptie hollownes, but weight;
('emptines, hollownes' in the others);
And what heare there for welcome but my grones?
('what cheer,' in the others).

In i. 3. 136 (same sheet) the Devonshire copy has 'And grating shocke of wrathfull yron armes,' while the other two copies have 'harsh resounding armes,' due to an accidental repetition of the adjectives in the preceding line: 'With harsh resounding trumpets dreadful bray.' The care with which these corrections were made is shown by the fact that the printing of this sheet was stopped to change the spelling of a word by the insertion of a single letter; 'portculist' being altered to 'portcullist' in i. 3. 167: 'Doubly portcullist with my teeth and lippes.'

The mistaken ingenuity with which palpable misprints in the early editions have often been defended by good critics is well illustrated by Malone's attempt to justify 'what cheer' in one of the lines quoted above in opposition to 'what hear,' which appears in the quartos of 1598, 1608, and 1615, and in the folios. Assuming that 'cheer' was the reading of the earliest edition, he said that the change to 'hear' showed 'at how very early a period the revisers of Shakespeare's pieces began to tamper with his text, under the notion of improving it, or of correcting imaginary errors of the press'—and so on through more than an entire page of comments. He says that 'the passage furnishes an evident proof of the value of first editions'; and so it does, particularly when their misprints are corrected while they are on the press, and we happen to get hold of a corrected copy.

That copies of the folio of 1623 vary here and there has long been known, and it was the intention of the Cambridge editors to note all such variations in their footnotes; but my attention has been recently called to an instance of the kind which escaped their scrutiny, and which, so far as I am aware, no editor or commentator has pointed out. It is in 'The Taming of the Shrew,' ii. 1. 201, where Staunton's photographic facsimile of the folio and Booth's reprint both read 'Women are made to beare, and so are you,' while the Chatto and Windus facsimile (photographic) and Paterson's reprint have 'beate' for 'beare.' That the latter is the corrected reading is evident from the context.

The volume of the *revised* Cambridge edition containing this play is not yet published. — *The Critic. N. York. 13 July 91.*